

Religious Pensees  
Reflection Three: On the Core of the Faith

As we celebrate this most significant time of the year in the Christian calendar, namely, those events surrounding what we refer to as Holy Week: from the poignant entry of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a beast of burden, to his trial, beating, execution and death, followed by the joy, grace and love of the resurrection, let us open our hearts, spirits, and minds to the power this faith may have in a world in desperate need today. Let us remember these events as the essence of our faith, the core of our belief, and that which gives our lives hope. Let us remember these convictions provide the basis for our ethic of love, a love which reaches out to all human beings, regardless of race, gender, status in, or style of, life. We reach out and care for a world which needs compassion, integrity and love.

It is never too late, nor inappropriate, to reflect on these beliefs, for we understand the ancient Anglo-Saxon word, be-lief literally means what one lives by --- and so we must. We draw strength from our faith; we discover hope for our lives; we feel the grace and power of God who surrounds us as we think on these things. But, all this is meaningless unless we convert our experience into reality, unless we actually live these values in our lives as truly and as often as we are able. We may not be able to accomplish great deeds; our talent and resources may be limited. But let me remind you: no good deed, no concern for another human being is too small to be pleasing to God, to be of value in this life, or to go unnoticed by those who see with the eyes of faith. The importance of this is made clear to us in the concluding verse of Paul's great Hymn of Love in his first letter to the Christians of Corinth when in the mid-first century he wrote: "...So faith, hope, love abide, these three: but the greatest of these is love."

Demonstrating love, doing the good, sharing with those less fortunate are values and principles worth pursuing; they are things of beauty. The great English poet, John Keats, captured this thought magnificently when he wrote these immortal words in his masterpiece, Endymion:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever;  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet  
Breathing.

The Christian gospel, properly understood, and gently, kindly lived, is itself "a thing of beauty and a joy" even to eternity. So, be at peace; do the good; share love with all you meet; and may the grace of God surround you; the strength and power of God uphold you; and the love of God flow in and through you.

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